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Parashat Tazria

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KEEPING OUR EYES ON THE ROAD

By Rabbi Yoni Mandelstam

Bringing a child into this world is nothing short of miraculous. Chazal even consider parents to be “partners with Hashem” when a child is born (Kiddushin 30a). It is therefore rather surprising that a mother must bring a Korban Chatat, a sin offering, after having a child. The Torah states, “*UVen Yonah O Tor LeChatat,*” “And a turtledove or a young dove as a sin offering” (12:6), implying that she must atone for a sin which has occurred. The nature of this Korban Chatat strikes us as unusual and perplexing.

Interestingly, the Ba’alei HaTosafot in the Da’at Zekeinim (12:8 s.v. *VeChipeir Aleha HaKohein*) understand the simple reading of the Pesukim to not be referring to a sin offering. Rather, when the Torah here mentions the concept of Kaparah (atonement), it should be interpreted as a purification and cleansing process as opposed to atonement. The woman who gave birth did nothing wrong, and her Korban reflects her cleansing process after childbirth in a hygienic sense of the word. This being said, the authors of the Da’at Zekeinim admit to the fact that the Gemara has an entirely different approach to this Korban.

The Gemara (Niddah 31b) records that the students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked their Rabbi what a woman is guilty of after having a child, and his response was that, “At the time of her birth pains she took an oath to never have another child.” At first glance, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s response is troubling; a sin offering seems like too harsh of a response to an innocent woman experiencing pain. Perhaps, to explain this Gemara on a philosophical level, it can be suggested that the Torah is particularly strict in response to this woman’s oath in order to teach us the timeless lesson that the Jewish people, by definition, must always look ahead to a brighter future despite pain and distress. Anyone who is willing to give up on contributing to the future of Klal Yisrael, even for a moment, is found guilty to some degree.

The theme of looking ahead to a brighter future can be found in the Pesach story itself. The Gemara (Sotah 11b) says that the Jewish people were redeemed from the Egyptian slavery in the merit of the righteous Jewish women. Specifically, the women would bring water and fish to their husbands in order to encourage them to think ahead to the future of the Jewish people despite the difficult moments of slavery. This episode illustrates the strength of Jewish women

specifically, and it teaches us to never get lost in the troubles of the present moment without thinking of a brighter day ahead.

Similarly, the Mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh reminds us to always renew ourselves in spite of challenges. Each month represent a new opportunity for growth. It is no coincidence that the Mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh was given by Hashem to Moshe in Mitzrayim itself— if there was ever a time to give up and not look ahead to the future, it was during the slavery in Egypt. Yet Hashem instructed Moshe to look at the new moon in the midst of Egyptian bondage. This is because the Jewish people, by definition, look ahead to grow.

The Seder night is the most opportune time of the year to highlight the resilience of the Jewish people. Often, there are multiple generations of one family sitting around the table telling the story and reciting the Hagaddah together. A grandchild might recite the Mah Nishtanah as the grandparent watches in amazement. The family proceeds to recount how someone tries to destroy us in each and every generation, but Hashem always saves us from their hands. The family is not only reciting the story of the Jewish people in ages past, but they themselves live the story as they pass on our tradition from one generation to the next.

The Pasuk in Tehillim (139:12) states “*Ya’ir KaYom Lailah,*” “Night will shine as day.” According to the Zohar (2:38), this Pasuk is referring to the Seder night. Perhaps, the meaning of this Zohar is that the Pesach Seder highlights the resilience of the Jewish people and their ability to “shine even during the times of darkness.” When we gather at the Seder, we realize that there is always hope for the Jewish people, as we are on a journey led by Hashem. We look ahead to a brighter future and must never vow to prevent the growth of tomorrow, no matter how difficult and painful today may be. When we conclude the Seder by reciting LeShanah HaBa’ah BeYerushalayim, we testify to the fact that we live with a sense of hope and optimism towards the future of Am Yisrael.

MILAH MORALS

By Yonassan Rutta ('20)

In Parashat Tazria the Mitzvah of Milah is mentioned and then it is followed by the Dinim of a Metzora. This Semichut Parashiyot teaches us that if a baby has Tzara’at on his Eiver (limb), he still receives a Brit Milah on the eighth day. Kli Yakar (VaYikra 13:2 s.v. Adam Ki Yihyeh Be’or Besaro) explains that this Semichut HaParashiyot is similar to the one we find in Parashat VaYakheil, where we learn that just as Shabbat is Docheh (overrides) the building of the Mishkan, so too, we learn here that Brit Milah is Docheh the Halachot of Tzara’at. Interestingly, Kli Yakar interprets the word Docheh (used in Nedarim 31b) differently than the traditional understanding of ‘override,’ translating it as ‘prevention.’ He then continues and says that when one removes the Orlah (foreskin) during the Brit Milah, one must also remove the Orlat HaPeh, preventing the child from speaking Lashon HaRa and thereby ensuring he does not contract Tzara’at. However, there are

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multiple reasons for which someone contracts Tzara'at; Lashon Hara is not the only cause for such a punishment. Tzarut Ayin (stinginess) and Gasut HaRuach (haughtiness) also cause one to acquire Tzara'at.

If so, Brit Milah, which only prevents Lashon Hara, does not truly prevent Tzara'at. Thus, we can view Brit Milah and Lashon Hara in a new light. Milah is the quintessential identity of a Jew. It represents an archetypal trait which distinguishes a Jew from a Nochri: the ability to restrain one's physical desires. One of the main attributes which separates man from beast is man's ability to withhold from his instinctual and immediate desires. An animal eats, sleeps, and mates whenever it desires. It acts on impulse and instinct. In contrast, a human thinks about what to eat, when to eat, and how much to eat. A Nochri sleeps when he has time and indulges his physical desires. However, a Jew is a step greater, as he or she tries to fulfill the Divine Will. Jews observe Kashrut, distance themselves from Arayot, and undertake several other Mitzvot to better their lives. Milah is a perfect example of this fact. We literally give of our own flesh and blood, in one of the most intimate places, because it is the will of our Creator.

Lashon Hara is the complete antithesis of this trait. A person engages in Lashon Hara to illegitimately elevate himself. He/she experiences pleasure at another person's expense. Gasut HaRuach affects one's behavior and eventually one's Avodat Hashem. Tzarut Ayin is an example of one who hoards for personal benefit and pleasure. Therefore, one can answer the question posed to Kli Yakar's explanation by explaining that if one performs Brit Milah, realizing and internalizing its inner message, then Tzara'at will not strike him. Furthermore, the reason that Kli Yakar mentioned only Lashon HaRa was because that is the primary Aveirah which causes Tzara'at.

Unfortunately, in today's times, the practice of Milah is attacked by some. It is described as a barbaric custom. May we all have the strength and courage to uphold the values the Torah and instill them in our people's future generations.

A GE'ULAH OF SELF

By Natan Lehman ('19)

At times, we all desire a reset button to change the past or to create a new future. Parashat Tazria has the keys to doing such on a spiritual level.

Parashat Tazria and Metzora are often read together, but due to this year's extra Adar, the Parashiot are read separately. Both Parashiot deal with the laws regarding a Metzora (a person contaminated with Tzara'at). Parashat Tazria focuses on the different appearances of which the Tzara'at can take form, while Parashat Metzora discusses the purification period of the Metzora.

When one notices a red or white blemish, he/she is to report to a Kohen for further examination. If the Kohen determines that the person is contaminated with Tzara'at, he expels the Metzora from the community for seven days. The Metzora can reenter the community at the end of the seven days if the Kohen confirms that the Tzara'at has healed. Additionally, Parashat Metzora states that prior to a Metzora resuming his normal activities, he goes to the Mikveh for purification.

Immersion in a Mikveh is the primary method of purifying oneself. All converts must immerse themselves in a Mikveh prior to their conversion since many compare the immersion in a Mikveh to a spiritual rebirth. According to the Gemara (Yevamot 47b), a convert is considered a Jew once he or she exits the Mikveh. Moreover, many compare the water that is on a convert's body after emerging from a Mikveh to the water on a new-born child following his birth. The Metzora goes into the Mikveh for rebirth and thereby being suitable to reenter the community.

In honor of Rosh Chodesh Nissan, Parashat HaChodesh (Shemot 12:1-20) is read for Maftir. The passage contains Bnei Yisrael's first Mitzvah: Rosh Chodesh. Rosh Chodesh is the declaration of the new moon that marks the start of a new month in the Jewish calendar. Rashi (Shemot 12:2 s.v. *HaChodesh HaZeh*) interprets the word "Chodesh" as "renewal." This means that every month is a time for a new beginning. Furthermore, we use the lunar calendar for its symbolic trait of humility. The moon expresses its humility by not shining its own light; but rather, reflecting the light of a greater source (i.e. the sun). We also try to express our humility by not overly expressing ourselves and by reflecting the light of Hashem. Indeed, we were created BeTzelem Elokim (in the image of God), and we should strive to act as such. Lastly, just like the moon, which is constantly waning and waxing, we are going through a never-ending spiritual battle with highs and lows. However, just as the moon continues to shine, so too must we as well.

Finally, for Parashat HaChodesh, we read a special Haftarah from Sefer Yechezkel (45:16 - 46:18) that discusses the Korbanot that will be given by the prince of Bnei Yisrael on Rosh Chodesh Nissan during the time of the third Beit HaMikdash. Thus, we see the completion of a spiritual reset akin to that of the Metzora and the moon.

All of the three passages we read this Shabbat symbolizes the theme of redemption and renewal. The tedious process a Metzora undergoes to do Teshuvah and become pure again is connected to the moon's lengthy cycle of growth and recession since they both have the goal of reflecting the light of Hashem. Hopefully, by repenting and pressing the spiritual reset button, we can all merit, as depicted in this week's Haftarah, the Mikdash HaShelishi and its glory.

KASHERING DENTURES FOR PESACH PART III

By Rabbi Ephraim Rudolph ('98) DDS

Editors' note: The following article by Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Rudolph is the third part of a series on Kashering one's mouth for Pesach. The first and second articles of the series can be found on <https://www.koltorah.org>.

Last week, we suggested possible reasons why one can use dentures previously used for Chameitz on Pesach, analyzing the concepts of Keli Sheini and Davar Gush in light of a number of problems. Another answer, which may deal with all three issues proposed last week, is an idea proposed by the Peri Megadim in a different context. The Peri Megadim (Orach Chaim Siman 105) presents the idea of a Sfeik Sfeika, a double doubt, as a reason to be lenient in the case of a Keli Sheini. He writes that in a case where one knew for sure that an Issur (e.g. a piece of ham) fell into a kosher bowl of food, but does not know if the food was Yad Soledet Heimenu, then the food is Muttar because of a Sfeik Sfeika; the food

even according to Rama who is strict by Notein Ta'am LiFgam, will claim that there is no problem of Chameitz if the taste is completely Nifgam.

However, it seems that Rav Shlomo Zalman is not fully convinced of this Heteir since he goes on to advise one not to eat any hot or spicy Chameitz one day before Pesach so the Ta'am will definitely be an Eino Ben Yomo. Once it is an Eino Ben Yomo, we can rely on the lenient opinion that Eino Ben Yomo is Mutar on Pesach. The only other option is not allowing one to eat hot or spicy foods on Pesach, and that will prevent Simchat Yom Tov which is akin to substantial loss. This will help relieve the issues of Davar Gush and Keli Rishon. For the Davar Charif problem, we can rely on those opinions that say a Davar Charif is only true for a Korat Shell Chilitit and Hevel in the mouth will cause the taste to become unfit for human consumption before Pesach. In conclusion, it seems from his language that he is still clearly uncomfortable with this whole approach.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach then advises that one should drink water up to the maximum temperature that one can handle. This is based on the concept KeBolo Kach Polto, meaning that one can kasher an item in the manner of how it absorbed the taste. Therefore, many argue against Maharshal that a Davar Gush can have the status of Keli Sheini. We can follow the view of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 451:6) that one can Kasher utensils even according to its Rov Tashmisho (main usage). Usually the vessel is Bolei'ah from a Keli Sheini, and once in a while it is Bolei'ah from a Keli Rishon; on the basis of the Shulchan Aruch, one can Kasher from a Keli Sheini. A mouth is usually Bolei'ah from a Keli Sheini as well. Therefore, it can be Kashed from a Keli Sheini.

There is perhaps an issue with relying on Rov Tashmisho for a Davar Charif. The Badei HaShulchan (96:1 s.v. *Yeish Omrim*) questions whether or not Rov Tashmisho works for a Davar Charif. He writes that the leniency of Rov Tashmisho is only when the Beli'ot are already Eino Ben Yomo, so the Beli'ot are only a Rabbinic level prohibition. Still, many opinions hold that a Davar Charif creates the Ta'am of an Eino Ben Yomo into a LeShevach on a Torah level. Therefore, the Badei HaShulchan writes that when the leniency of Rov Tashmisho is used, one should be careful not to use it with a Davar Charif. Instead of relying on Rov Tashmisho to help alleviate Rabbi Shlomo Zalman's issue of Davar Charif, we must use the Badei HaShulchan's approach and block off this avenue.

Nevertheless, Rav Shlomo Zalman was speaking about fillings and crowns in his day, which were basically metal. In fact, Rav Shlomo Zalman himself writes so in a letter. However, there have been advances in dental materials that are used for crowns and fillings which may warrant additional analysis of Beli'ot and Kashering. With regard to crowns: the majority of crowns are no longer metal, like gold and silver; rather, the crowns are made out of ceramics. For approximately fifty years, the main crown was the porcelain fused to metal crowns (PFM). These crowns had porcelain layers on top of metal. At first glance, one may want to be strict with these crowns and rule that since it has porcelain (and according to most authorities porcelain cannot be Kashed) these crowns cannot be Kashed. Nonetheless, only the original PFM crowns in the early 1900's had clay mixed in to them. Due to the dull appearance the clay presented in the crown, the clay component was removed and only glass materials were used to make the porcelain cover. Therefore, the Kashering of these crowns should follow glass utensils. The absorption properties of glass are discussed amongst the Rishonim.

Rav Yosef Karo rules (Orach Chaim 451:26) that glass does not absorb at all. Therefore, it doesn't need any Kashering. Rama (ibid.) disagrees and claims that the prevailing Ashkenazi custom is to be strict with glass. The Ashkenazi custom is that it has the status of earthenware; it absorbs and never releases its Ta'am, and so it can never be Kashed. However, this debate is only relevant when glass is the only material in the item. When the glass is only a covering over the item, the glass takes on the properties of the substructure. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 451:23) writes that in a case where earthenware is covered with glass, the item can never be Kashed as per the earthenware component underneath the glass. Furthermore, Rama (Orach Chaim 451:26) writes that a sliver cup covered with glass cannot be Kashed, as per his own opinion about glass. However, the Vilna Gaon (Orach Chaim 451:23, 26) and the Bi'ur Halachah (451:23) write that according to the Shulchan Aruch's opinion, this cup can (and must) be Kashed in the same way as the metal underneath the crown, despite being covered by glass.

Although very often these dental crowns have a metal collar that is not covered with porcelain, the porcelain can also deteriorate. Therefore, these crowns should be treated as metal utensils and have the same status as Rav Shlomo Zalman's crowns, and according to the Shulchan Aruch it would still need to be Kashed. Rama would still maintain his position that these cannot be Kashed.

However, in the last ten years there has been a further change: the crowns being developed are entirely ceramic crowns. The basic elements of dental ceramics are made of silicate, leucite, feldspar, and others which are glass-like and once again have no trace of clay or earthen-ware. If this is the case, then perhaps dental porcelain and ceramic crowns would have the status of glass. Therefore, Sephardim, who hold like Rav Yosef Karo in Orach Chaim 451:26 and rule that glass does not need to be Kashed, should permit these crowns with simple washing. Ashkenazim, who hold like Rama, are presented with an issue to this ruling. Fortunately, there is room to be lenient. First, many hold that one must be strict only regarding Chameitz, not regarding other Issurim. Second, even in the context of Chameitz, Rama (Darchei Moshe Orach Chaim 451:19) writes that we can be lenient BeDi'eved. We will analyze the extent of this leniency of Rama in next week's issue of Kol Torah.

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